

## BOOK REVIEWS

**THE MAKING OF A MEDICARE DOCTOR**—John M. Lanham, MD. Vantage Press, Inc., 516 West 34th Street, New York, NY (10001), 1977. 88 pages, \$5.95.

This well-written little book expresses the views and frustrations of many if not most idealistic and conscientious physicians in America—perhaps particularly in rural America—today. It comes through rather as a protest against the way things are going than as a definitive contribution to solving any of the problems. One senses the author has found a zestful personal solution, and that writing this entertaining account of some of his personal experiences and observations was also therapeutic. The physician reader who has been out in practice for a while will find much with which to empathize in this little book and it may make him feel a little better, too. It did this reviewer.

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**CHILD CARE IN GENERAL PRACTICE**—Edited by Cyril Hart, MA, MB, DLitt, MRCP, General Practitioner, Yaxley, Peterborough. Churchill Livingstone—Medical Division of Longman, Inc., 19 West 44th St., New York City (10036), 1977. 442 pages, \$16.00 (softbound).

In the British National Health Service all primary care of sick children is provided by general practitioners. Well-child care is provided occasionally by general practitioners, but mostly in Welfare (Public Health) Clinics. The 400 pediatricians in the country are hospital-based and see only sick children referred to them. Most general practitioners do not have hospital privileges. In the reorganization of the National Health Service in 1975 primary care teams consisting of general practitioners, public health and visiting nurses, and social workers are intended to be established, but this is not yet frequently seen and in the instances where the concept is in operation each member seems to practice individually rather than as part of a team. Therefore, one of the biggest problems in primary care in Britain is that preventive pediatrics, developmental surveillance and the care of sick children is fragmented and uncoordinated, and health education is rudimentary.

Child care represents about a fourth of a general practitioner's work load and as he is the sole provider of primary care for sick children in the National Health Service it is appropriate that a practical manual on child care in general practice should be written by general practitioners. Of the 32 contributors to the book, 29 are general practitioners. The book is intended to supplement the standard pediatric textbooks and to emphasize the childhood diseases commonly encountered in general practice. Therefore it was disappointing to find that such

common problems as obesity, learning disorders and behavioral problems in children received rather cursory and simplistic consideration with little practical help provided for the physician of first contact. Developmental screening was also dealt with on a philosophical rather than practical level and the important work of Starte is glossed over in one paragraph. If, as is stated in the preface, the intent is to produce a practical manual for workers in the field of primary child care then a practical approach to coping with these common problems would seem to be a necessary part of the manual. Similar criticisms apply to the discussions on breast-feeding and artificial feeding, and the eye is virtually ignored, yet 50 percent of children in Britain with a squint at age 7 years have not been seen by any ophthalmologist. Allergic problems other than asthma remain either unrecognized or nonexistent in the United Kingdom, compared with the 15 percent of pediatric contacts in America.

The initial seven chapters on the organization of child care in Britain provide a wealth of information for students of the National Health Service and incidentally show that even after 30 years of the National Health Service the infant mortality rate is not falling as rapidly as in other European countries and that for older children there remains a steep social class gradient in mortality rates. The chapter "The Social Services and the Practice" defines very clearly the lack of equality among members of the primary care team but avoids the issue of how to achieve a team effort.

The sections on clinical care in acute illness, continuity care and essays in family care contain many well-written chapters. It is interesting to note that throat cultures do not play a part in the management of tonsillitis and that the time-wasting procedure of tickling the pharynx with a finger (ouch!) or spoon to induce vomiting in a child is still recommended. In the chapter "Care of the Newborn" a short period of asphyxia is considered almost inevitable at birth and represents a rather dangerous approach, particularly when carbohydrate metabolism rather than oxygen is defined as the means of coping with this.

The editor, Dr. Cyril Hart, and his contributors deserve to be congratulated on developing this manual which will be of great value to British general practitioners. For American family physicians the book represents an interesting comparison between entirely different methods and standards of child care.

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